

Iowa Bonsai Association Newsletter

www.iabonsai.org

<https://sites.google.com/site/cedarrapidsbonsai/>

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IBA Response to Coronavirus

Scott Allen

As always, the safety of members, volunteers, and general public is our top priority.

The Iowa Bonsai Associations (IBA) response to the coronavirus pandemic continues to be informed by the guidance of official bodies, including Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>) whose framework for mitigation for community groups is based on the level of community transmission of COVID-19.

As the national response to the coronavirus pandemic shifts to a state-focused and phased approach the IBA has canceled all club meetings and implemented the appropriate protocols to help keep our members, volunteers, and the general public safe. We'll continue to follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>) guidelines and will advise our membership when plans to start in-person meetings and activities is more clear.

If you should have any questions or concerns, please contact me directly.

Scott Allen – IBA President
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EIBA December Activities

December 10, EIBA Board Mtg.

This will be a Zoom mtg to determine the program for 2021. Details like meeting time will be communicated soon..

Bonsai Soil Components for Sale

**Pumice \$20 for five gallons
\$15 if you bring your own Bucket.
Akadama \$32 per bag, \$30 for members**

Contact Scott Allen or Tim Peterson

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Bonsai in Bloom

From Bonsai Empire

This time of year can be a bit on dreary side. We could use a few blooms to improve our attitudes. I have taken some photos of several species of blooming bonsai from Bonsai Empire. Enjoy!



Bougainvillea by Lorna Toledo



Satsuki Azalea



Wisteria Bonsai by Heike van Gunst



Magnolia Stellata



Prunus Mume (Japanese Apricot) by Michael Bonsai

Black and Red Pine Technique

John Denny



I think more Iowa bonsai hobbyists should add double flush pines to their collections. Many people do not understand how these pines work nor what techniques they need to do and when to do them. So, they stick with deciduous and junipers.

Black pines and red pines are classic bonsai species. Black pines are called the “King of bonsai”. Old pine bonsai are powerful and magnificent. Even shohin pine bonsai are strong bonsai. Nearly all shohin displays show a black pine at the top position in the display.

Black pine (*Pinus thunbergii*) and Red pine (*Pinus densiflora*) are what is called “double flush” pines. This simply means that the new shoots come out in late spring and early summer in the form of ‘candles’ that then open up into a profusion of fresh new needles.

However, if we go in and cut the candles (around June 10 in Iowa) just between last year's growth and this year's growth, then these species will throw off new candles or a "second flush" These second flush candles will be shorter in length meaning shorter needles and there will be two to five of the new short shoots.

So, what are the advantages of "decandling" red and black pines in early June? You will get three main advantages.

First, you will get 2 to five times the number of new shoots instead of just the one original shoot. This leads to a) ramification and b) a balancing of energy among the tree. This balancing of energy happens because we leave weak candles alone to grow strongly and we cut strong candles which somewhat weakens them.

Second, we will get shorter needle length on the second flush needles. They have had a far shorter growing season than the regular candles would have.

Third, you likely will get back budding. There are three types of buds on a pine. The buds at the end of each shoot, needle buds, and adventitious buds that can pop back inside on a tree. We manage the buds on the end of our shoots with the decandling process. We don't have any real control over needle buds. They happen or don't happen on their own. And we can encourage budding back on branches towards the trunk or even on the trunk itself. By cutting candles on the end of shoots we lessen the amount of the plant hormone called auxin. One of the things auxin does is retard the growth of secondary buds and adventitious buds. With a reduction in auxin, those buds back inside closer to the trunk are free to grow.

Does this all sound complicated? It may. But, do not fear. The actual techniques involved are easier to manage. Follow the steps below.

Fertilize double flush pines early in the spring, then cease fertilizing May 1. Reduction of fertilizer at this point will keep needles from growing too long.

In early June, take sharp scissors and cut the strongest candles at the end of strong shoots at the base or just barely above the base where this year's growth extends.

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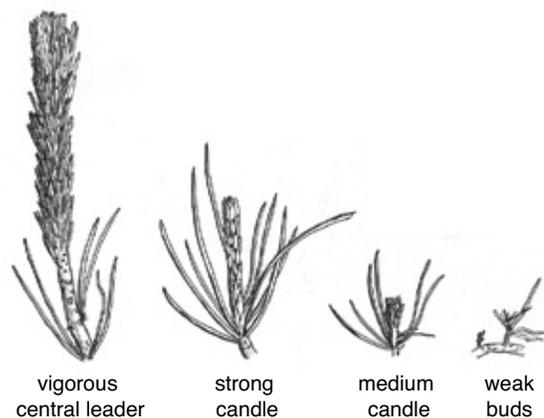
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Cut The Strongest Candles



Begin fertilizing again August 15.

In October or November, examine the new shoots that have emerged from where you cut candles. You should see two to five short shoots for new needles just opening up. Select two of those shoots and remove the rest in that cluster. You want two shoots of similar size and they should be oriented horizontally side by side. If they are not, then wire them to be horizontal.

Also in October or November, you can pluck extra needles from the strongest shoots which are usually at the top of the tree or on the ends of larger branches. You can reduce the needles down to 5 to 10 pairs of needles. Do not pull needles from weak shoots and leave more needles on medium strong shoots than on the strong shoots you have plucked, say ten pairs. This needle plucking will help balance energy next year as you will leave more photosynthesis ability on weak shoots and less on strong shoots.

Now some caveats:

If you still want to develop trunk girth, wait another year or two before beginning decandling. Remember decandling will slow your tree down.

If your tree is weak, skip decandling. Get it healthy first. Lots of sun, lots of fertilizer, repot into good soil if needed.

Doing this practice year after year will develop a nice strong, healthy red or black pine for you. It works for large pines or shohin pines. Remember, these techniques work for DOUBLE FLUSH pines. Other pines like White Pine, Ponderosa, etc., are SINGLE FLUSH pines. They require different treatment. We will discuss the proper technique for these pines in another article. If you want to try a Black or Red pine, I suggest purchasing a small to medium sized one with plenty of good growth on it. It will be more manageable as you learn the techniques required. I think you will enjoy your new pine and you will be a better and more well rounded bonsai hobbyist.

Creative Solution: Azalea with Lost Top *Michael Hagedorn*

Several years ago a weak Satsuki 'Kinsai' azalea arrived in the garden with a dead crown, dead branches, and shari down two sides---characteristics that suggested a promising juniper rather than an azalea.

After a period of puzzling, we thought a prostate styling might be a new future for it, and that, with luck, we might even manage to create such a thing. The idea was to use the branches to be the multiple trunks of a new raft style, by laying the trunk down. It was, however, a rather tall tree, so to eventually get this prostrate tree into a reasonable-sized bonsai pot the lower trunk of the original tree and its root mass would need removal. For the time being it was laid down in a long flat to accommodate the long trunk. We had roots to grow first.

Since 2017 tree has grown well, and most importantly, has grown roots were we needed them, along the flanks of the laid down trunk. Over a period of two years we cut a successively deeper wedge into the lower trunk, in preparation to severing it. As the tree recovered its vigor and the shoots grew stronger, more roots initiated from the laid down trunk, and earlier this year the lower half of the trunk was finally completely severed not far from the first branch (now a trunk).

These photos show where we started with the tree, and where it is now. Hope you enjoy the photo essay-



This Satsuki 'Kinsai' azalea had been weak for years, and came into the garden with a dead top and two shari lines with dead branches all along them. Question was: What can we do with this tree? With such large dead areas, a normal azalea styling seemed beyond reach. In March 2017 the tree had regained its vigor and we attempted a restyling.



An azalea that had seen better days---to the left of the chalk line, a wide swath of dead tissue. A shari, to be precise.



...and lay the more promising half in a flat. This trunk half had several branches that now rose as trunks. The original root mass is to the right, which we buried in pumice and covered with sphagnum moss---just to keep it going for a while.



Tucking sphagnum along the roughed-up cambium line where we hoped roots would initiate.



The solution we came up with was to cut the tree straight down the deadwood area...



And this is the azalea three years later, in November 2020, roughly styled to be a multiple trunked, raft style. The entire original root mass has at this point been severed (though it's still in the flat), with the new roots supporting the new style---from a taller, tree-like design to a smaller, spreading, shrubby design. It did prove a rather malleable species due to its ability to root anywhere along the trunk.

Give Thanks

David Richmond

Give Thanks

For the warmth and the breeze

Give Thanks

For your tools and your trees

Give Thanks

For family and friends

Give Thanks

And joy never ends

Timely Tips

John Denny

Well, gosh, its year end already. How did that happen so fast? I guess we were paying attention to pandemic issues, elections, hurricanes and wildfires. Bonsai seems to have slipped our minds!

For many it has been a tough year with loved ones catching COVID, kids staying home to learn online, maybe a lost job or reduced work hours. I was thinking about these things this week, when I suddenly realized there were things to be thankful for. It could be worse. What if bonsai trees could catch COVID? I would have to worry about each of my trees. How are they each feeling today? Do they have a cough? Shall I check their temperature? And if one is sick, do the others need masks? Which kind of mask would fit best? Hmm?

So, life isn't as bad as it could be. Our trees are unaffected and we can go back to worrying about people and climate change and will Santa be a super spreader this year?

Okay, if you have not figured it out yet, this was my best effort at mimicking Andy Smith's writing style. Andy always makes me laugh or think or feel. Or all three, just like any good writer should do.

Tips for November. Most of my trees are back inside – for the second time this Fall. I will likely keep them inside now. I am becoming less inclined to lug them out

and back in again.

Clean your trees up, clean up the soil and pots. Now is a good time to prune deciduous trees as you can see what you are doing. Think about how you want each branch to grow next year. How many buds do you want to leave? On alternate budding species, the branch will grow in the direction of the last bud you leave. So imagine your branch going in that direction in the future. If that is okay with you, then cut.

Clean up junipers. Junipers have loose bark, which you can brush off. Remove all weak growth, it will die off anyway. Clean out new growth in branch crotches. Pluck or prune growth that points downward below a natural pad. Look for any wire that should be removed.

November is pine work month. Reduce the number of buds to two per shoot. Pluck extra needles from the strongest shoots. Remove old or weak needles.

Most people spray trees prior to bringing them inside for the winter to limit the spread of pests or disease while they are in close quarters. Also, hobbyists are not as likely to closely inspect their trees for pests or disease during the winter when the garage or storage area is 34F. It is difficult to check on trees wintered outside, too. So, make sure they are in good shape prior to the beginning of winter storage.

Clean up your winter storage area well, so your trees can go into a clean well organized area. Try not to over crowd trees. Make sure it is easy access to water each tree and that you can water front and back easily. Make sure you have thermometers to track temps in your storage area. Hobbyists use various heating approaches to maintaining safe temps. No one size or plan fits all situations. This is a case where knowing other bonsai people in your local club can help. What do they do and how close is their set up to yours?

Over winter, in a garage, water your trees on a regular basis. It might be weekly, every two weeks. Just don't let them get dry. Dry and cold is a deadly combo. If you keep trees outdoors, water well initially. If the soil is thawed you can water. Make sure the water gets to the soil surface as bark or mulch can prevent the water from getting to roots. Snow cover helps water slowly. Last, over winter read a good bonsai book. Or watch some videos on bonsai. Never stop learning!